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International Writing Program Archive of Residents' Work

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Writing Sample

Thu Maung U

Includes "FAMILY LEGEND."

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FAMILY LEGEND

The nature of an essay or a paper is to be compact, informative and studded with examples. First and foremost, I am obliged to put forth a request about my paper in advance. You all are requested to consider my paper just as a small talk-- not a grand one.

I have had a thing in my mind since my childhood. When the teachers wrote their lessons on the blackboard, the handwritings differed as much as the teachers differed. Some handwriting was large and some was small. Taking notice of that fact, a very simple theory occurred to me: the lessons by the teachers with small handwriting occupied much space on the blackboard, and those by the teachers with a large style just occupied less space. From that point on, I drew the conclusion that small events tend to happen much in life whereas large ones tend to happen less. When I became a writer, that theory, borne in mind since my childhood, encouraged in me a habit of expressing small and simple incidents experienced every day by human beings. However, everything that happens does not come into being as literature. There must be fiction, trick and all, in it. That is why I select something special from the occurrences encountered daily from which to form the plot of a story. The trouble is, as I am a movie star as well as a singer, it is difficult for me to show up in public. And what would I do? I could only compose the episodes involved with my business. I am especially likely to write about sodden fools. Although my way of finding events is so simple and so commonplace, it aims for the rare finding that we ourselves are prone to forget. To take an example: a kid is bought a toy by his or her parents. And the kid is happy. One day the toy is lost, he cries. As soon as the toy is found, the kid rejoices. What matters is the great difference arising between the bliss of owning a brand new toy and the pleasure, after losing it, of finding it again.

That becomes my way of forming the plot of a story—just sharing the emotion of “Oh,I’ve ever experienced that!” To put it in another way, though my father himself was a prominent writer, he didn’t teach me the art of writing stories. He only gave me occasional and vague criticism. When the raw materials for my stories is limited, I go and have a chat with my mother. At 83, being a rhetorician and a woman of good memory, she then pours out her experiences and family legends. That is what provides a lot of raw materials for my stories. It is in this way that I have become a writer who composes family stories.

P.S. I must acknowledge here that I couldn’t reach the –very difficult--status of a writer of family sagas.

Thank you very much.